8th Plan, it is difficult to declare any new National Highway at present.

Protection of National Highways from Floods/Cyclones

2533. SHRI S. AUSTIN: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total length of National Highways covering Tamil Nadu;

(b) what are the stretches of National Highways in the State which have been identified as prone to damage due to floods and cyclone; and

(c) what are the steps taken to protect the same from damage by natural calamities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) 1896 km.

(b) Stretches of N. H. Nos. 4, 5, 7, 45, 47 and 49 close to the coast are prone to flood/cyclone damages.

(c) Protection works are taken up depending upon the requirements and availability of funds.

Decline in Indian Shipping lines

2534. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the country's 77 per cent international trade is carried by ocean freighter;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the share of Indian Shipping lines in carrying general cargo has declined from 24 per cent to 1 per cent during the last decade;

(c) whether Government have gone into the reasons of this decline and if so, what are the details thereof; and

(d) what measures are being taken to increase the shipping fleet of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) About 95 per cent of India's total overseas trade in terms of volume is carried by sea.

(b) No, Sir. The percentage share of Indian Shipping lines carrying general cargo has declined from 24 per cent in 1984-85 to 14.4 per cent in 1992-93.

(c) Inadequate tonnage and absence of fully cellular container vessels in the Indian fleet, are the main reasons for decline in the share of Indian Shipping line.

(d) The Government have taken the following measures for augmenting the Indian fleet to increase the overseas trade of India and greater participation in the movement of seaborne cargo:—

1. Automatic approval is now given for:

(i) Acquisition of all catergories of ships except crude tankers and OSVs, by Private Shipowning Companies.

(ii) Sale of ships for further trading|scrapping to a compeny within India or abroad.

(iii) Acquisition of ship from an Indian Shipyard; and

(iv) Acquisition for replacement tonnage.

2. Shipping Companies have been allowed to retain sale proceeds of their ships abroad and utilise them for fresh acquisition.

3. Shipping companies are allowed to acquire vessels through bare boat charter-cum-demise method.